



Evaluation Brief #4: Does Paths to QUALITY™ Help Indiana Parents Find Quality Child Care?

What is Paths to QUALITY™?

Paths to QUALITY™ was created in Fort Wayne, Indiana in 2000 to help parents identify and select quality child care and to recognize providers who work to achieve higher-quality care, beyond minimum state licensing requirements. In 2008, Paths to QUALITY was introduced statewide as a voluntary system for licensed child care centers, licensed family child care homes, and unlicensed registered child care ministries.

The goals of Paths to QUALITY are to:

- » improve child care quality
- » recognize providers for their quality achievements
- » provide a tool for parents to use to select high-quality child care
- » support better development for children birth to 5 years

The four-level Paths to QUALITY rating system has a “building block” structure¹. Each level has quality criteria that must be met. To advance, the provider must meet all standards for the new level and also maintain the required standards for lower levels. As providers take steps to improve quality, they progress toward Level 4 – *accreditation* – recognized nationally as the highest standard of child care quality.

Figure 1. Paths to QUALITY building block levels



Purdue University Research on Paths to QUALITY

The state of Indiana contracted with Purdue University to evaluate the first three years of Paths to QUALITY, from 2008 to 2011. This research/policy brief highlights key findings from the Purdue research regarding the awareness of the program among parents across Indiana as well as those with children in participating facilities, and the impact it might have on their future child care decisions. See other briefs in this series for more information about the Purdue evaluation research.



Indiana parents' awareness of Paths to Quality is growing slowly...

The Purdue research team conducted a random telephone survey of 765 Indiana parents with children ages 0 to 6 in 2009-2010, and again in 2011.

Are parents aware of Paths to QUALITY? How did they learn about the program? How will it affect their child care choices?

% of Parents That	2010 Survey	2011 Survey
...are aware of PTQ	12%	14%
...heard about PTQ from their child's caregiver	57%	67%
... would make a child care decision based upon a provider's PTQ quality level	61%	71%
...would consider paying more for child care rated at a higher level	47%	57%

Interviews revealed that parents who already have children enrolled with a Paths to QUALITY provider are becoming more aware of the program...

The researchers interviewed a random sample of 450 parents of children who were placed in Paths to QUALITY child care centers or family child care homes.

Do parents know that their child care provider is participating in Paths to QUALITY?

- » Yes! 78% of parents reported their provider was in PTQ.
- » 22% of parents reported their provider was not in PTQ or that they did not know.

How did parents learn about Paths to QUALITY?

- » Family's own child care provider – 62%
- » From a relative or friend – 7%
- » Employer – 7%
- » From a posted flyer – 6%
- » Child Care Voucher Program (CCDF) – 6%
- » Another child care provider – 5%
- » TV or radio – 5%
- » Website – 3%

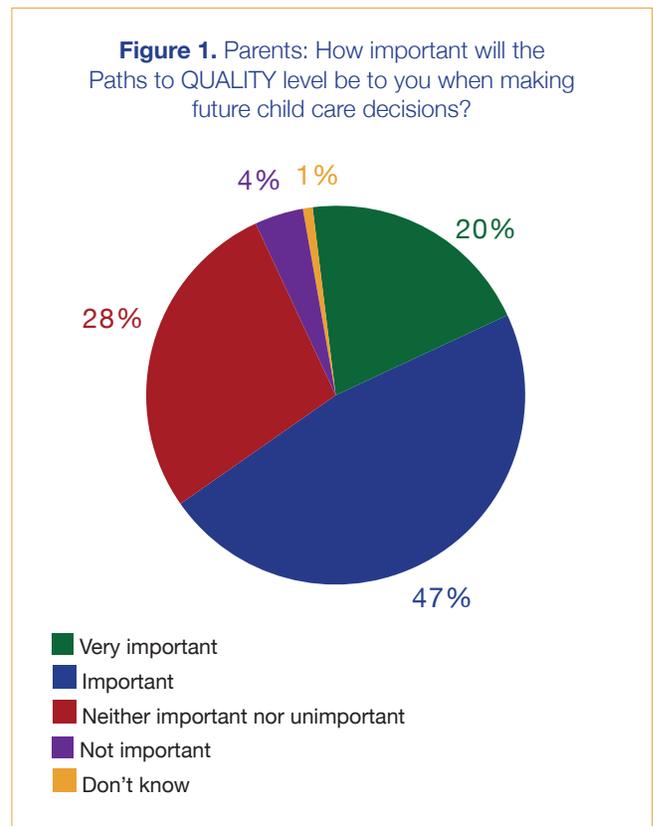
What are the most important reasons parents chose their current child care provider?

Reasons parents chose child care providers	% of parents
Level of trust with child care provider	92%
Level of comfort with child care provider	89%
Overall quality of child care provider	80%
Warmth of child care provider	75%
Experience of child care provider	55%
Educational activities provided by child care provider	51%
Provider is close to home	34%

Note: Parents could give more than one reason.

Are Paths to QUALITY levels likely to affect parents' future child care decision making?

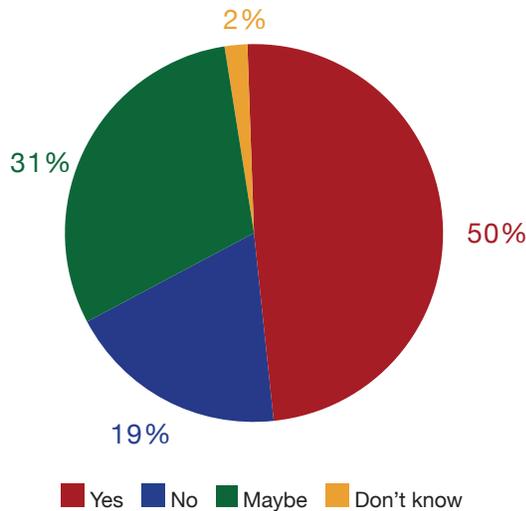
- » Yes! 67% said that a higher level would be either an "important" or "very important" factor in their decision when choosing child care. See Figure 1.



Are parents willing to pay more for child care that has a higher Paths to QUALITY level?

» Yes! About one-half of the 450 parents interviewed said that they would be willing to pay more to a provider on a higher level. See Figure 2.

Figure 2. Parents: Would you be willing to pay more for child care that is rated at a higher level in Paths to QUALITY?



Conclusions and Recommendations

According to Indiana parents, they want to know if providers have chosen to participate in Paths to QUALITY. This information helps parents with their child care decisions and the value they place on the care they choose. The Purdue researchers recommended:

- » Let Paths to QUALITY providers know that parents are willing to pay more for higher quality child care.
 - ✓ Between 13 and 27% of providers rated at the four PTQ levels have increased their fees to support higher quality care.
- » Encourage Paths to QUALITY providers to find new ways to reach current and future parents with PTQ information.
 - ✓ Providers can request marketing materials such as banners and flags that display their PTQ level, as well as information pamphlets and car decals for parents!
- » Develop media options to promote PTQ, such as TV/Radio public service announcements.
- » Include providers' Paths to QUALITY level on child care web sites, to increase public awareness.
 - ✓ Parents can now identify participating providers, their PTQ levels, locations, and other valuable information on www.childcareindiana.org.



The Purdue Research

Purdue University completed independent assessments of quality using research-validated measures in a statewide random sample of 312 licensed child care center classrooms, registered child care ministry classrooms, and licensed family child care homes. The Purdue team also interviewed more than 1800 parents and 270 child care providers, and completed developmental assessments with more than 550 infants, toddlers, and preschoolers in Paths to QUALITY centers and homes. The research took place between March, 2009 and June, 2011.

The Purdue evaluation research focused on the following questions:

1. Are child care providers of all types entering the voluntary Paths to QUALITY system? Do providers understand the system?
2. What are the incentives for providers to enroll? What are the barriers?
3. Do child care providers move to higher Paths to QUALITY levels after enrolling in the system?
4. Are providers aware of available training/technical assistance (T/TA) resources to help them increase Paths to QUALITY levels, and do they use them? Does T/TA help providers advance their Paths to QUALITY levels?
5. When providers attain higher Paths to QUALITY levels, does this result in higher quality care, as assessed using research-validated measures?
6. Are children who are placed with providers who have achieved higher Paths to QUALITY levels developing more optimally than children placed with providers having lower Paths to QUALITY levels?
7. Are parents of Indiana infants, toddlers, and preschool children aware of and do they understand the Paths to QUALITY system? Does the Paths to QUALITY system affect parents' child care decisions?

¹ QRIS National Learning Network, Glossary of Terms, <http://qrisnetwork.org/glossary>.

This research-policy brief was written by Treshawn Anderson and James Elicker at Purdue University. It is one in a series available on the Purdue Center for Families website (www.cfs.purdue.edu/cff) under "Publications."

1. Evaluation Brief #1: Key Findings
2. Evaluation Brief #2: Does Paths to QUALITY™ Produce Quality Care and Education for Indiana's Young Children?
3. Evaluation Brief #3: Does Paths to QUALITY™ Benefit Indiana's Child Care Providers?
4. Evaluation Brief #4: Does Paths to QUALITY™ Help Indiana Parents Find Quality Child Care?

For more detailed information about the methods, measures, and results, refer to the Paths to QUALITY Final Evaluation Report (2011) also on the Center for Families website.

For more information about Paths to QUALITY, visit the Paths to QUALITY website: www.in.gov/fssa/2554.htm.

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